



Story By ROBERT M. LANE

# 40 WILLARD

## A MAJOR REFIT & REPOWER FOR RINCON

A couple of years ago, Cindy and Gregg Robinson were in a favorite pub on Bainbridge Island debating the future. Really, both would say later, they were arguing.

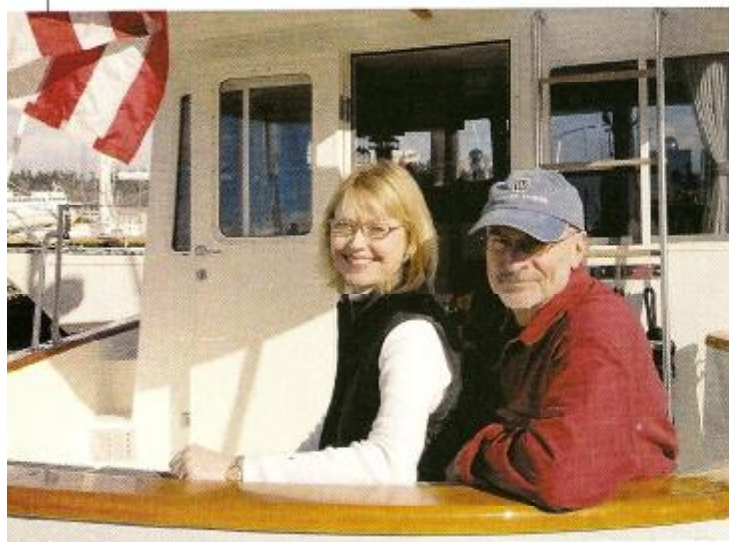
They had finished remodeling an old island country house into a stunning new home with a view of Washington's Eagle Harbor. Before that, they had cruised widely for three years and transited the Panama Canal on their 46-foot Hallberg-Rassy sailboat.

It was time, Cindy suggested, to go boating again. Gregg wasn't sure the time had come for him. "It was a heated discussion," she remembered much later. "Gregg feared I wanted an ocean-crossing trawler."

Although Gregg wasn't ready to commit that evening, he knew the next boat would be a simple boat with simple systems. They went home, still disagreeing.

Next morning, however, Gregg looked up YachtWorld.com and found a dealer's advertisement for a 40-foot Willard; he knew that family of boats and remembered being aboard one. That was Monday. On Tuesday, with Cindy's encouragement, he took a ferry across Puget Sound to Seattle, where he grabbed a jet to California, where he found the boat in Newport Beach.





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Writing about the experience on their website ([mvrincon.com](http://mvrincon.com)), Gregg said: "Though *Rincon's* exterior was a bit tired cosmetically, I had never seen a boat of this age so free of obsolete gear and do-it-yourself modifications. Like all Willard trawlers, her systems were an exercise in simplicity, but unlike most, *Rincon* had been kept that way.

"Her interior teak joinery and wall coverings were pristine. As far as I could tell, she was the perfect candidate for the major refit we had in mind, and by the end of the week we had a purchase agreement." The sellers were Rink and Connie Kofford, the boat's owners for 24 years.

The survey was encouraging. The hull, solid fiberglass, was in good condition, with none of the blisters some Willards have suffered. Because this was a later model Willard, the deckhouse was made of fiberglass with foam coring. (Until the late 1970s, deckhouses had been glass over plywood.) The deck is fiberglass with balsa coring.

*Rincon* was loaded on a truck and hauled home to Bainbridge Island, where the Robinsons soon learned the yacht was not as OK as they had thought. There's no need to turn to the end of this article for the punch line, however. Here it is: everything turned out beautifully.

### A SELECT GROUP

Willard Marine has been building boats in Anaheim, California, since 1957. Although it has launched both production and custom recreational boats, the bulk of its business has been for government agencies, the military, and commercial users. One of its largest yachts is the 120-foot *Silverado*, built originally as a research vessel.

Willard is well known for the 36-foot Vega, designed

by Bill Garden. A sedan, a motorsailer, and an aft pilothouse model were constructed on the same hull.

In the late 1990s, the company sensed the growing market for cruising trawler-type yachts and decided to seek a larger share. Rod Swift, who designed the original 40, was called out of retirement to draw lines for a pilothouse model. Patrick Gerety joined the staff to market the new boat.

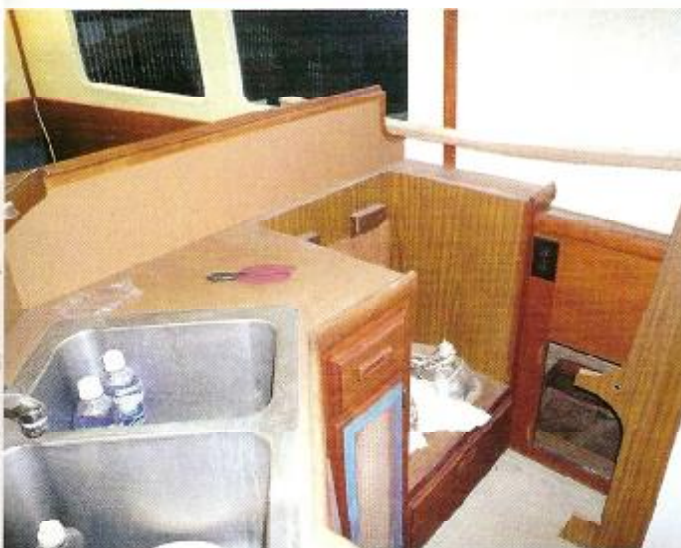
Seven years ago, I flew to California to check out Willard and its expansion plans. I spent one long afternoon in the factory, watching craftsmen at work and talking with company officials who optimistically predicted Willard could build two dozen yachts a year. The next morning, we boarded a 40 in Long Beach Harbor. That was on Sept. 11, 2001.



Above left: Cindy and Gregg Robinson, pleased with and proud of their work in restoring their 1982 vintage Willard 40, catch a moment to relax on the settee built into the curving transom. Above: The graceful lines of *Rincon* provide a practical bonus—a smooth and efficient ride.

We did the sea trial, although our thoughts were elsewhere. The boat looked fine, but that tragic day pretty much ended Willard's yachting plans. Government agencies turned to Willard—a proven builder of police and fire boats and other emergency craft—for a fleet of vessels for the new campaign against terrorism. Flooded with contracts, the company backed away from the recreational market, and today its website makes no mention of its half century of yacht construction.

About 15 of the Willard 40s were built, including two pilothouse models. The company produced about 150 of the 30- and 36-foot Vegas. In total, it's estimated the company built about 250 pleasure boats. So the fleet is small, and Gregg and Cindy were fortunate to



find a good one at the moment they first began looking for a new boat.

The Willard is true to trawler styling. She is full displacement, with a round bottom. She is a double-ended boat, with a lovely rounded transom that allows fitting of a curving, upholstered settee on the cockpit side. Because of her design, she cruises at displacement speeds, about 7-1/2 knots.

## THE PROJECT

*Rincon* reached Eagle Harbor in July 2006. Work began in September. Gregg and Cindy did much themselves, but for serious projects they took her to Seattle. First, they had shipwrights replace the caprail, which had been badly damaged by decades of Southern California sunshine. Gregg removed all of the boat hardware; the new rail, crafted of heavy teak, was fitted and perfectly varnished at Jensen Motor Boat Co. on Lake Union.

A closer look at the boat's exterior finish revealed extensive gelcoat oxidation (again, the result of too much sun) and confirmed the need to repaint. After the caprail was in place, *Rincon* was moved west to Canal Boat Yard and Pacific Fiberglass for hull prep and painting.

"We had hoped to paint only the hull and buff out the top," Cindy said. But the deckhouse needed and received a coat of paint as well. The contractor used Awlcraft, an Awlgrip product. The work took two months and was the single most expensive project in the restoration of *Rincon*.

Although the gelcoat was in poor condition, the underlying fiberglass was in good health, and the smoothly finished hull gleams in the sun. The hull was painted gray, and the house received a coat of white. "I'm glad we did it all," Cindy added.

While in the yard, the fuel tanks were cleaned and inspection ports were added, and the propeller and its shaft were replaced. Next, the boat was scheduled for another stop on the lake, at Gallery Marine, for what the Robinsons expected to be "relatively minor" work on the Perkins 6.354 diesel engine.

The California surveyor had not seen the extreme corrosion inside the engine's heat exchanger. Galley Marine found it and estimated the cost of a new manifold would be \$7,000 to \$10,000, Gregg said.

Putting that much money into a 25-year-old engine made no sense, the couple agreed. So they approved the installation of a John Deere 4015, a smoother, quieter diesel engine. While awaiting delivery, Gregg cleaned and repainted the engine room, making it, too, look like new.

Obviously, the Robinsons hadn't foreseen the need to

Top: *Rincon's* galley before remodeling. The refrigerator stood higher than the counter, reducing work space. Middle: A serious remodeling effort: the owners ripped into the cabinetry to make the galley more efficient and attractive. Above: The refurbished galley, featuring new appliances and counters, is just spacious enough for the chef. But it opens to the saloon and adjoins the helm, making the chef a part of the crew.



Above: Wicker door fronts were first used on boats to improve ventilation; on *Rincon*, they're used throughout for decoration. Opposite page left: The saloon offers easy relaxing in a compact area. Opposite page right: Handsome new fabrics decorate the Vberth in the guest stateroom in the bow.

repower, but major projects usually bring surprises. "I should have known from doing the house," Gregg said. After a season of cruising, Cindy is happy with the John Deere. "I am really glad we repowered," she said.

They replaced Lexan windows that were scratched and cloudy and installed a new cockpit door. Gregg installed stainless steel portlights, new interior overhead lights on teak bases, dorade ventilators, and hatch covers.

Ship carpenters added a teak valance throughout the main cabin, complementing existing teak trim. Gregg and Cindy said they wondered how much time the shipwright would spend simply examining the area in which he would install the new valance. They understood, later, as they watched him cut the odd angles to make the wood fit perfectly.

Gregg learned again how important it is to spend time

observing when beginning a new project. He installed a Kabola hot-water-circulating furnace in the engine room, doing the work himself. "I spent a lot of time down there, just looking," he said. The work is first rate, and *Rincon* was comfortably warm for my late-winter visit.

Cindy did much of the sewing, including drapes, duvet and portlight covers, and shams. Money she saved helped pay for the furnace.

The galley was remodeled, with minor changes to cabinetry, but its basic shape stayed the same. Originally, a refrigerator stood several inches above the galley countertop. The Robinsons replaced it with an under-the-counter unit to create more room for food preparation. A new sink and stove were brought aboard; Cindy and Gregg repositioned them in the galley to make the space work better for them.



A backsplash on the aft edge of the counter screens guests in the saloon from the paraphernalia of cooking. The forward galley bulkhead is clear, creating space for a second person to stand watch while *Rincon* is under way. The new countertops and appliances blend nicely with the teak cabinets and trim and the wicker fronts used on cupboards and cabinets throughout the boat.

The new galley is a major improvement over the old one. In terms of finish and use of materials, it's even better than the final 40s built by Willard a decade ago.

### THE FINISHED BOAT

Viewed from the dock, *Rincon* looks like a new boat. Up close, she still looks new.

Gregg and Cindy back the boat into her slip to position the boarding gate in the starboard bulwark next to the finger float. Because she has a rounded stern, *Rincon* does not have a swim platform or boarding access over the transom.

Once aboard, the starboard side deck

Inside, a settee with all new upholstery is to port. A new high-low teak table fronts the settee. To starboard are canvas-and-pipe captain's chairs, a small table, and shelves for books.

The helm is forward to starboard; a real ice chest under the seat is used for storage when the boat is in her home port. In the galley, forward on the port side, a side wall angles away from the saloon and defines a corridor leading to steps to the head and staterooms. A cabinet hangs from the overhead but doesn't block views for the person preparing meals.

"I love cooking on board," Cindy said. "We eat well. I love the galley and am very happy in it."

The headliner fabric is in amazingly good condition for its age. The wall panels are covered with a vinyl fabric. When Gregg called from California to talk about the boat, Cindy asked if the wall covering was the original "plastic burlap." It is.

All cabinet fronts are of the original wicker material, and they still look new. Fresh carpeting was installed in the saloon and forward spaces, while the head soles were resurfaced with vinyl flooring.

Down the steps, the master stateroom is to port. It has a double bed athwartships, new portlights, art on the wall, and a head with toilet and sink. Another head, with a shower, is on the starboard side at the foot of the steps. Forward is a compartment in the bow with V-berths.



Robert M. Lane



Courtesy of Gregg and Cindy Robinson



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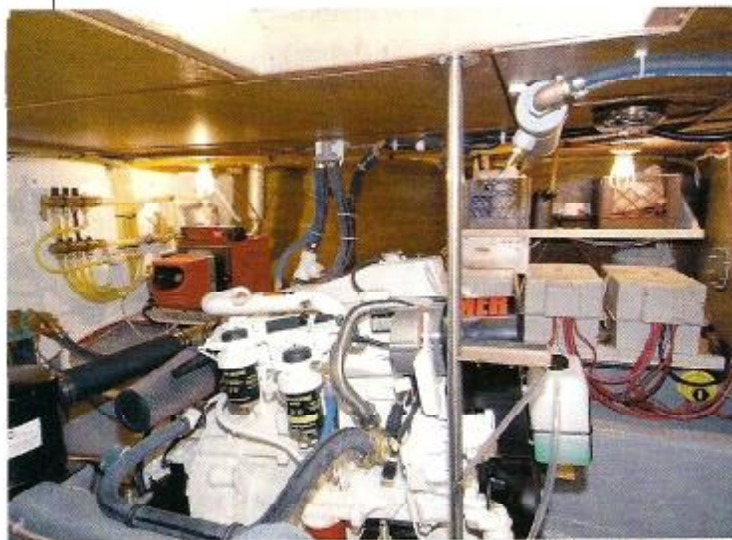
leads aft to the cockpit and the newly upholstered curving settee. It was a fine spot for a break in the winter sun. A hatch opens to a storage area below, and a ladder leads to the flybridge, where a dinghy is stored. A new centerline door opens to the saloon.

*Rincon* has big windows all around, and the view from the helm is superb.

Willard designed the saloon settee as a convertible berth, but the Robinsons, while redecorating, changed it to seating only.

I climbed the ladder to the flybridge. Steps would be better, but there's no room for a stairway. Stout handrails make the climb easy and safe.

A small dinghy occupies the aft portion of the bridge;



Photos by Robert M. Lane

Top: A new John Deere 4045 is the highlight of the engine room. It offers quieter, more efficient operation than the original diesel. A new Kabola furnace is in the background. Above: Although the owners of *Rincon* hired others to do much of the restoration work, they installed the Kabola furnace themselves in the open, uncluttered engine room.

a hand-powered lifting boom is used to drop it into the water. The helm seat and controls are to starboard, with seating for guests to port. Willard built an unusual stairway through the center of the bridge that leads down to the top of the trunk cabin. Theoretically, it provides quick and easy access to the bow, but Gregg and Cindy find they don't use it much.

Gregg had a new aluminum mast fabricated and powder coated. An interesting feature is a stainless steel gooseneck that carries wiring from inside the boat through the overhead and to a cable run in the base of the mast. It's a clever idea, and one I've not seen before. Gregg, however, said he's seen the gooseneck

## RINCON

LOA	39' 9"
LWL	36' 1"
BEAM	13' 8"
DRAFT	4' 3"
DISPLACEMENT	33,000 lb.
BRIDGE CLEARANCE	28'
FUEL	600 U.S. gal.
WATER	260 U.S. gal.
HOLDING TANK	75 U.S. gal.
ENGINE	John Deere 4045 (repower)
MAXIMUM SPEED	8.5 knots
CRUISE SPEED	7.5 knots
RANGE AT CRUISE SPEED	3,000nm (no reserve)
FUEL BURN AT CRUISE SPEED	1.5gph
DESIGNER	Rod Swift
BUILDER	Willard Marine

used on sailboats. It will keep water out of the boat and mast.

## GONE TO SEA

Eagle Harbor is a busy place, with recreational boats moored in several marinas. The Washington State ferry system has a terminal for car-ferry service to Seattle and its central maintenance pier in the harbor. There's always traffic.

As we headed out of the harbor, bound for Puget Sound, we watched two tugboats bring a disabled ferry, *Hyak*, into the maintenance center for repairs. The ferries are up to 460 feet long and travel at 18 knots. *Hyak*, a smaller ferry at 380 feet, had suffered an electrical failure in Seattle earlier in the day, and her speed under tow was only a few knots. We passed in the channel with lots of space between us.

Gregg pushed the throttle to 1650 rpm and cruise speed as we turned out of the harbor. My decibel meter also had suffered an electrical failure (its 9-volt battery was dead), but experience told me the decibel reading would have been about 70 on the A scale. That's fairly quiet for the helm area of a boat, with the engine just beneath us. New all-electronic diesels are quieter than the mechanical engines that have been in use for generations.

Lots of throttle will push her to something over 8 knots, but the stern will begin to squat. Low speeds



means she's easy on fuel. *Rincon* burns 1.5gph at 1650 rpm. That's better than the old Perkins, which burned about 3gph, according to some engine data I found.

*Rincon's* 600 gallons of fuel will carry her a theoretical 3,000 miles. With reserves, she safely can run 2,500 miles.

*Rincon* easily moved up to cruise speed, and we headed south along the east shore of Bainbridge Island. Near the entrance to Port Blakely, I took the helm and did my usual: a hard turn to starboard. The Willard performed effortlessly and turned a tighter circle than expected.

I headed north, back toward Eagle Harbor, and another Washington ferry approached us on the starboard quarter, again with plenty of clearance. Despite their size, the ferries don't throw a huge wake. But it was enough that I turned to greet the wake bow-on.

*Rincon* carries 7,000 lb. of ballast, and it showed as she rose slowly over the ferry wake and then moved easily through it and down. There was no slam, bang, bump. She does roll when a wake or wave is on the beam, but Gregg and Cindy said she recovers quickly and easily.

This beautifully restored Willard is a fine cruising yacht for her owners (and maybe some lucky friends). She's slow compared to contemporary yachts. But is there a better way to explore a coastline? I don't think so.

As mentioned earlier, the need to board on the starboard side forces the Robinsons to back *Rincon* into her slip. This is not always easy in a single-engine boat, but Gregg and Cindy have figured out a landing plan using spring lines that works just fine for their confined moorage. They are considering improvements that will help in tight spaces—possibly an articulated rudder, possibly a bow thruster.

The Robinsons spent some of the 2007 cruising season in the Gulf Islands of southern British Columbia. In April of this year, they motored to Princess Louisa Inlet and Chatterbox Falls in the company of *North Star*, another Willard 40. The inlet is on the B.C. mainland, at the end of the long and winding Jervis Inlet. Spring is a good time to see the falls, huge with snowmelt draining from the surrounding peaks.

They realized a major cruising dream, transiting the Panama Canal, several years ago. "I don't think that way any more," Gregg says. It looks like they'll do more exploration of the Inside Passage, with Southeast Alaska an eventual goal.

### THE BUDGET

Most people who buy and refurbish an older boat fall silent when it comes to talking about cost. Gregg and Cindy, however, agreed to share.

They paid \$125,000 for the boat. That seems a fair price; the only other 40 I could find for sale was a boat



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Distinctive double-ended styling identifies the Willard line of yachts. Carrying 7,000 lb. of ballast, the 40-footer offers an easy, comfortable ride. Here, she cruises in Eagle Harbor off Bainbridge Island.

of similar vintage on the East Coast priced at \$139,000. They paid \$10,000 to have *Rincon* trucked north. The trucking bill would have been cut in half had they removed the flybridge, but they realized that might cost even more in dollars and aggravation.

By the time all the remaining jobs are complete, they will have spent about \$300,000, including the purchase price. Originally, they had a tentative budget of about \$100,000 for the refit. But they were surprised by the need to repower and paint, both expensive jobs.

It's possible to buy a new 40-foot boat for about \$300,000. But it would lack the quality of finish, salty styling, stout construction, and character of *Rincon*. By the way, *Rincon* is a Spanish word meaning "nook" or "corner." Cindy likes to define it as "a quiet place." The name came with the boat, and they chose to keep it.

Gregg said he might have looked around more had he known the total cost would near \$300,000. But he added: "I am real happy with what we did."

Cindy, who had argued passionately for a boat that evening in the pub and who obviously enjoys the boating lifestyle, said: "This is a Willard. The boat for us." 